

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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U.S. Official to Lead Maritime Trade Mission to India

12 January 2012

Washington — Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Francisco Sánchez will lead the Commerce Department's first ports and maritime technology trade mission to India February 20–24.

"As one of the world's fastest-growing economies with more than 4,600 miles of coastline, maritime transport is essential to India's external trade," Sánchez said.

Representatives from 14 U.S. firms that provide state-of-the-art cargo-handling equipment, port security and maritime-technology equipment will visit Chennai, Ahmedabad and Mumbai, the Commerce Department said.

In 2011, the government of India announced a new shipping-sector policy that includes an investment of \$66 billion in ports and \$27 billion in shipping. There are 200 ports across India; the new policy proposes to increase India's port capacity from 1 billion tons to 3.2 billion tons by 2020.

The trade mission will include one-on-one business appointments with pre-screened potential buyers, agents, distributors and joint-venture partners; meetings with regional government officials; and networking events.

This mission is the first in a series of events planned for 2012. Commerce Secretary John Bryson will lead a high-level trade mission to Delhi, Jaipur and Mumbai March 25–30. It will be Bryson's first mission as commerce secretary.

State Department on Mosque Attack in West Bank

11 January 2012

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesperson
January 11, 2012

STATEMENT BY VICTORIA NULAND,
SPOKESPERSON

Mosque Attack in the West Bank

The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms today's most recent vandalizing of a mosque, as well as the burning of three cars, in the West Bank village of Deir Istiya. Hateful, dangerous, and provocative actions such as these are never justified.

We note that the Israeli Government has pledged to capture those responsible for these reprehensible attacks

and to bring the perpetrators to justice. We encourage law enforcement officials to do so expeditiously and we encourage local authorities to work together with the community to reduce tension and to defend religious freedom.

We again call for calm on the part of all parties and urge them to avoid any actions that could lead to an escalation of violence. Violence only serves to impede the search for peace between Israelis and Palestinians based on acceptance and respect.

Energy Secretary Rallies Industry for Speedy Auto Innovation

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 11 January 2012

Washington — The U.S. auto industry should innovate constantly to meet the global market demand for fuel-efficient vehicles and to "keep the United States at the technological forefront of important industries," said U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu January 11.

Chu was speaking in Detroit, long the hub of the U.S. auto industry, where the North American International Auto Show is being held January 9–22. Chu said the 100-year-old event is especially important this year, coming at a moment when the U.S. auto industry is breaking out of a long decline with a 35 percent increase in output in 2010. Long trailing foreign importers in domestic auto sales, the U.S. manufacturers have regained market share and recovered from the severe economic setbacks of a few years ago.

The Obama administration helped the auto industry out of that slump, Chu said, while demanding that U.S. automakers innovate and restructure to regain competitiveness. Recovery is happening, but must continue if the nation is to hold a place as a leader in the competitive global market.

"More and more car buyers will live in emerging economies like China, India and Brazil," Chu said to the Detroit Economic Club. "In recent years, China surpassed the United States to become the world's largest auto market. By 2050, the number of vehicles on the road is expected to double to 2 billion."

Chu said the Obama administration is taking a number of steps to encourage greater innovation and nudge automakers into a more competitive position. The administration is pushing for regulations to require the auto industry to increase vehicle fuel-efficiency and build the kinds of cars the world wants, Chu said. These requirements have a list of potential benefits, according to administration documents:

- Saving consumers money on fuel costs.

- Reducing the need for imported oil.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2 billion tons during the life of vehicles sold through 2025.

The administration is also promoting further research to increase innovation in various aspects of auto manufacturing, hoping to further reduce vehicle weight with stronger and lighter metals and to improve design and capacity for electric vehicle batteries.

"I am pleased to announce that we are launching a new research center this year to dramatically improve battery and energy storage technologies for vehicle and grid applications," Chu said. The energy secretary expressed hope that this center could produce not merely incremental improvements, but "technologies that would enable us to leap forward and could allow prototype testing in this decade."

The federal government is supporting innovation by lending capital to companies developing next-generation, fuel-efficient vehicles, and to companies developing the retooled, advanced manufacturing facilities to produce these vehicles.

"New Traction" in Place for Haiti's Quake Recovery

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 11 January 2012

Washington — The goal for Haiti's reconstruction after its devastating January 12, 2010, earthquake has been to "build back better" and provide the Haitian people with the infrastructure for sustained economic growth, greater agricultural output and good governance. This could never be accomplished in two years, says Thomas Adams, the U.S. special coordinator for Haiti, but, nevertheless, real progress is already being made and the Haitian people are seeing changes for the better.

As Haitians and the international community mark the second anniversary of the earthquake and reflect on the cholera epidemic and hurricane that brought even more tragedy to their people, very recent and tangible developments are pointing toward a better future. After a free election, the new government, led by President Michel Martelly, formed in October 2011. For the first time in 25 years, Haiti will have all three branches of its government functioning, with the authority to make key decisions and remove many roadblocks that have been standing in the way of the reconstruction effort.

In March, the country will see the opening of the Caracol Industrial Park, with the potential to create 65,000 jobs, provide new housing and spur the creation of nearby small businesses.

"We're starting to get new traction," Adams said. "Haitians are taking ownership of their reconstruction."

"Would we like to go faster? Of course we would," he said. "But the reality is Haiti is not going to be fixed in two years. It's going to take 10 years of intensive work by donors and the government of Haiti to get the place growing consistently, in terms of annual economic growth."

It is now easier to address the needs of Haitians who have remained homeless since the earthquake. The United States has helped in the interim period by providing nearly 30,000 plywood-and-concrete temporary shelters to protect families who had been living in tents from hurricanes and earthquakes, but Adams said there had been real problems in obtaining the land for more permanent housing. Having the new government in place will help.

"There are certain decisions only a government can make, such as to use eminent domain to get land and to authorize the destruction of unsafe buildings," he said. There is also a voucher program in place that allows homeowners with repairable property to use certified Haitian construction companies to rebuild their homes up to required safety standards for earthquakes and hurricanes.

The Martelly government "is much more engaged," he said. "They want to do it right — not force people off land because they're tired of having them on public squares," but to ask them where they lived before and what is preventing them from going back, and even offering to pay the first year of rent if that is preventing them from leaving.

"It takes time to do it right," he said. "We do want this to be a Haitian-led reconstruction ... and sometimes we just have to wait for the Haitians to lead because it's their country. We can help, but they have to really make the key decisions and do a lot of the work."

The most immediate change that visitors to the capital Port-au-Prince will notice today is the amount of rubble that has been removed, Adams said. The earthquake created an estimated 10 million cubic meters of rubble. Put another way, if dump trucks packed with that amount of rubble were parked end to end, they would stretch more than 6,000 kilometers. But the United States has funded more than half of the removal of 5 million cubic meters of rubble, of which 30 to 40 percent is being recycled into new construction. That means better access for traffic and equipment, and space for new housing.

Adams said much of the remaining rubble actually consists of condemned and unsafe houses that landlords insist are valuable. With the new government in place, decisions over the fate of those properties can now be made.

Every poll of the Haitian people says that what they want most are jobs, and the United States has been helping with big investments in agriculture and the development of the Caracol Industrial Park. Adams said 60 percent of Haitians live on farms, but agricultural production has been stagnant in Haiti for nearly 40 years.

It takes time to convince farmers to adopt new practices, such as abandoning traditional rice paddies in favor of planting dried grains and watering them. But as more have the courage to try new U.S. and internationally funded techniques and technologies to get higher yields, “they can, with fairly modest inputs, double or triple their income and really raise their activity,” he said.

The new industrial park’s anchor tenant will be Sae-A, Korea’s largest apparel manufacturer, which has committed to create 20,000 jobs and invest \$78 million over six years. Adams said the initiative will “really restore the textile industry.” The United States has been active not only in working to find investors for the park, but also preparing the site by doing environmental studies and by supplying electricity, water, housing, police stations and other community needs.

The commitment to “build back better” reflects the poor state of Haiti’s infrastructure and government, which existed even before the earthquake struck.

“When people say we’ve got to build Haiti back to what it was before the earthquake, that’s a pretty low barrier,” Adams said. “We don’t want a country where half of school-age kids don’t go to school, where half the population is illiterate, with the worst malnutrition in the hemisphere and the worst income disparities.”

The reconstruction of Haiti has been slower than many on the outside have expected because of the need to get important elements in place first, such as the government, the industrial park and other projects.

“That this would be ‘lickety-split’ is kind of unrealistic,” Adams said. “We’re always pushing against that.” But with good economic decisions, good governance and stability, and by maintaining good working relations with Haiti’s donor communities, the country “could become a middle-income country like the Dominican Republic next door in 20 or 30 years,” he said.

New Research Findings on HIV/AIDS Focus on Youth

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 10 January 2012

Washington — The U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) is releasing research findings that could have a direct effect on the well-being of the millions of children, adolescents and young adults infected with HIV or with fully developed AIDS.

Megadoses of vitamin D can help to counteract the bone loss that occurs as a side effect of tenofovir, a drug administered to some patients to treat HIV infection. NIH reported on the potential benefit of vitamin D for these patients on January 10.

In another study, NIH researchers and their partners found another health risk for children exposed to HIV in the womb. They can have language impairment — that is, slowness in developing speech and difficulty understanding spoken words and expressing themselves with words.

The significance of the finding is conveyed by the numbers of youth worldwide who are HIV infected, and the potential for expanded infection in this group. A publication released jointly by the World Health Organization and the World Bank estimated that 5 million adolescents and young adults are living with HIV, and most do not know their status. This age group also comprises a disproportionate share of new infections, more than 40 percent, according to the report. Another estimate made by the U.N. Children’s Fund calculated that approximately 370,000 children were born with HIV in 2009.

But the new research does provide evidence that adverse effects of treatment and exposure can be countered and treated.

Language impairment in children exposed to HIV before birth was twice as likely to occur as it does in the general population, according to the research group at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, one of the eight NIH institutes that supported this work. The research group suggests that children with prenatal exposure to HIV — even if they do not carry the virus themselves — should be screened and evaluated for language difficulty.

Among those who do carry the virus, treatment apparently helps. The HIV-infected children receiving little or no treatment were about three times more likely to have language impairment than HIV-infected youngsters receiving treatment.

Regarding the AIDS medication and the bone loss, tenofovir is widely used to treat HIV infection, according to the NIH news release, but it causes increased levels of a hormone that leads to bone loss. The same symptom is seen in vitamin D deficiency, which led the research team to try the vitamin D supplements to counteract that side effect. Monthly 50,000-unit doses of Vitamin D accompanying tenofovir treatment resulted in reduced levels of the hormone. A longer-term study is being launched to determine if continued doses would eliminate bone loss due to tenofovir.

"People in their teens and 20s may be on anti-HIV treatment for decades to come, so finding a safe and inexpensive way to protect their long-term bone health would be a major advance," said Dr. Rohan Hazra at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

With 27 institutes and centers, NIH is the single largest source of funding for medical research in the world. On World AIDS Day December 1, President Obama renewed the U.S. commitment to funding research to curtail the global pandemic and the suffering it causes. In 2011, the United States provided treatment to almost 4 million HIV-infected people and provided care and support to 13 million people affected by HIV/AIDS, including more than 4.1 million orphans and vulnerable children.

Trans-Atlantic Partnership Vital to Global Security

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer | 9 January 2012

Washington — The trans-Atlantic relationship remains an essential source of stability in an unpredictable world, and Europe is the principal U.S. partner in promoting global and economic security, Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon says.

The strategy outlined by President Obama and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta January 5 reaffirms the U.S. commitment to European security and ensures continued ability to meet NATO commitments, Gordon said during a briefing January 9 at the Washington Foreign Press Center. He added that the new Defense Strategy also aims to enhance U.S. cooperation and the ability of U.S. military weapons and equipment to easily work with those of European partners facing global challenges.

"If you look around the world and see where America is operating globally, you will see in so many cases how closely and importantly we work with our European allies and partners," said Gordon, who is the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs. "We have worked together on challenges around the world, most recently in Libya, ongoing in Afghanistan, but also Kosovo and the Balkans and the Horn of Africa."

The new strategy, unveiled at the Pentagon, reflects both a shift in global strategic thinking and the realities of a more austere national budget climate mandated by the U.S. Congress. The strategy is based on an eight-month comprehensive defense review by civilian and military leaders at the Pentagon, the U.S. military, the departments of State, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs, and the U.S. intelligence community. Obama ordered the review to guide defense planners on priorities and spending over a decade with an estimated savings of more than \$450 billion.

"It requires all elements of our national power, working together in concert with our allies and our partners," Obama said. "We've succeeded in defending our nation, taking the fight to our enemies, reducing the number of Americans in harm's way, and we've restored America's global leadership."

In the introduction to the strategy, Panetta said that the United States is at a strategic turning point after a decade of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and that it is time to shape a joint force for the future. He said the force that emerges will be smaller and leaner, but also agile, flexible, ready and technologically advanced.

Echoing the president's remarks, Panetta said the strategy calls for an armed force that has a global presence emphasizing security interests in the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, while still maintaining defense commitments to Europe and NATO, and strengthening alliances and partnerships across other regions.

Gordon said that at the 2010 NATO Lisbon Summit the allies agreed on a new strategic concept aimed at preparing the alliance to meet 21st-century security challenges. He said that during the upcoming NATO Summit in May in Chicago, the alliance will review progress being made. "The schedule for the Chicago summit has yet to be finalized, but I think you can expect, at a minimum, the alliance to focus on three key priorities: the transition in Afghanistan, NATO's capabilities and its partnerships."

The defense strategy guidance announced by the president is an important step in moving the United States toward the goals being set for the Chicago summit, and it further commits the United States to a number of things already made clear for European defense, he added.

"We will continue with our deployment of missile defenses, the European Phased Adaptive Approach, and this will of course include putting assets in Poland and Romania, a radar [station] in Turkey and the homeporting of missile defense-capable Aegis destroyers in Spain," Gordon told reporters.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said January 6 that, as the new strategy notes, meeting security challenges cannot be solely the work of the U.S. military.

"Diplomacy and development are equal partners with defense in our smart power approach to promoting American interests and values abroad, building up our economic prosperity and protecting our national security," Clinton said. She added that this new guidance is a critical element in an integrated approach to strengthening American leadership in a changing world.

"And it promotes our strategic priorities, including sustaining a global presence while strengthening our focus on the Asia-Pacific region; deterring our adversaries and fulfilling our security commitments; investing in critical alliances and partnerships, including NATO; combating violent extremists and defending human dignity around the world; and preserving our ability to respond quickly to emerging threats," Clinton said.

Julianne Smith, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Europe and NATO policy, said at the Foreign Press Center briefing that the reason for releasing the comprehensive review now is because the United States just ended its military operations in Iraq and is in a transition with its mission in Afghanistan.

The strategy is designed to ensure that the United States maintains the best military capability in the world, avoiding weakening its armed forces by balancing any force reductions and ensuring that they are taken strategically, and maintains a force with long-term viability, Smith said.

"The strategy places heavy emphasis on ensuring and maintaining U.S. global leadership, clearly a pillar, a long-standing pillar, in our foreign and defense policies," Smith said. That means, she said, that the United States must sustain and strengthen its robust network of international relationships and capabilities.

Gordon travels to Germany, Lithuania and Denmark January 10-14. In Berlin he will meet with senior German government officials and discuss U.S. and European engagement on global issues at the Körber Foundation, the State Department said January 9. He will then travel to Vilnius to attend the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's annual Snow Meeting on Euro-Atlantic security issues and meet with high-level Lithuanian and other Baltic government officials. In Copenhagen, he will meet with European Union political directors and hold discussions with senior Danish government officials.

U.S. Welcomes Expanded Arab League Mission in Syria

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 9 January 2012

Washington — The Obama administration expressed support for the Arab League's decision to increase its number of monitors in Syria and to extend its observer mission until January 19, but joined the organization in saying that the Syrian government has still failed to meet its commitments to stop the violence against peaceful demonstrators and release political prisoners.

"We were pleased to see the Arab League conclude that 150 monitors is not enough, that they need to expand the numbers," State Department spokeswoman Victoria

Nuland told reporters January 9 after the league met in Egypt to discuss the observer mission and agreed to increase the number of monitors to 300.

The organization also issued a statement January 8 that called on Bashar al-Assad's regime to follow through on its promises to release all political prisoners and end its violent response to the political demonstrations that have led to the death of more than 5,000 Syrian civilians since they began in March 2011.

"The violence has not stopped. ... [The] vast majority of [political prisoners] remain in jail. And we're still seeing all kinds of ... regime arms and weapons in residential neighborhoods," Nuland said.

The presence of monitors in some areas has created the space for protests to take place in safety, she said, and in those places the Syrian people "have been able to express their will, and they've been able to get some media attention to their desires."

She encouraged the Syrian opposition, which has been frustrated by the continuing violence, to "continue to do what they can to organize, to make their views known, to take advantage of those monitors who are there to get their message out."

Nuland praised the Arab League for taking on "quite a large responsibility in trying to stop the regime's violence" and said the Obama administration is prepared to respond if it asks the United States for technical help in the monitoring mission.

"This is ... a first outing for them as international monitors," she said. "It's a very important and valuable capability for the Arab League to be developing. So I think one thing that will come out of this one way or the other is some lessons learned ... in terms of what they need. And we obviously stand by to help if that's wanted."

Martin Luther King Jr. Day: A Time to Serve Others

By Jane Morse | Staff Writer | 9 January 2012

Washington — The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., who is remembered in the United States on the third Monday of January each year, is perhaps best known as America's chief spokesman for nonviolent activism as a result of his leadership role in the U.S. civil rights movement.

Born on January 15, 1929, King, a Baptist minister, devoted his life to ensuring equal rights for African Americans and all minorities who suffered discrimination and marginalization in U.S. society. Between 1957 and 1968, King traveled ceaselessly across the United States and, in some 2,500 public appearances, spoke out against

injustice. He suffered arrest, physical assaults and personal abuse of all kinds, and his home was bombed. But he never gave up his dream that "the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."

King's work caught the attention of the entire world, providing what he called a "coalition of conscience," which helped change American society and create new U.S. laws protecting civil rights.

In 1964, King became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to end racial segregation and racial discrimination. He turned over his prize money to further the objectives of the civil rights movement.

In addition to being a champion for the civil rights of minorities, King advocated for the rights of workers. In a speech delivered in 1965, King said: "The labor movement [in the United States] was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute, and above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival, but a tolerable life."

King believed that all labor has dignity and that economic justice was a critical component of civil rights reform. In a 1968 speech, King asked: "What does it profit a man to be able to eat at an integrated lunch counter if he doesn't earn enough money to buy a hamburger and a cup of coffee?"

King died upholding his beliefs. On April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee, King was assassinated by James Earl Ray, a white supremacist with a long criminal record. King had been in Memphis to lead a protest march in sympathy with striking sanitation workers of that city.

A campaign to honor King began soon after his death. Workers' unions provided the financial and social capital to make observance of King's birthday a nationwide movement. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation into law making King's birthday a federal holiday, but it wasn't until 2000 that the holiday was officially observed in all 50 states for the first time.

In 1994, the U.S. Congress designated the King holiday as a national day of service, calling on Americans from every walk of life to volunteer their time and effort on that day to help realize King's vision of a "beloved community."

King once said: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is 'What are you doing for others?'" Each year, Americans attempt to answer that question by

volunteering for activities such as fundraising for charities and collecting and distributing food to the needy.

"We have an opportunity to make America a better nation," King said on the eve of his death. "I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land."

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